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HYDROTHERAPY : -

A few pages on hydropathy . . .

1843 .



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A FEW PAGES

ON

HYDROPATHY, OR THE WATER CURE.

WRITTEN FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE SUFFERING UNDER

SEVERE ACUTE OR CHRONIC DISEASES.

BY A CLERGYMAN.

LONDON: W. E. PAINTER, 342, STRAND.

1843.

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PREFACE.

These pages are printed for private circulation ; but to meet the case of persons desirous to have copies of them, who are unable to obtain them—by reason of their being unacquainted with the writer or his friends,—the name of a London publisher appears on the title page, who will supply them, on application, at a small charge.

March, 1843.

HYDROPATHY, OR THE WATER CURE.

THE following pages emanate from a mind grateful for mercies of the highest description (not to be of a spiritual character) of which the reflecting mind can be sensible,—the restoration to a state of sound health and strength, after a life passed in painful and protracted suffering.

Next to the Giver of all good things, my gratitude is due to the system which, under Him, has restored me once more to life and vigour. Grateful to Him who hath raised me from a life of death unto life, and anxious to extend the blessings I have received, to others who may have suffered equally with myself, I propose to print, gratuitously, these observations, for the purpose of conveying to others the course of my experience, and of giving such information, within the compass of a few pages, as will enable all to obtain the same benefits.

In order to render my purpose as effective as possible, it is my intention to distribute a number of copies to each of my friends, who will, in turn, place them in the hands of those of *their* friends whom they may deem likely to benefit by them ; and thus it is not improbable, from the extensive range of my acquaintance, and the circle in which they move, that these pages may reach the highest rank of society, as well as the more humble classes—to which latter I shall pay my especial attention. My simple desire is that those into whose possession they may come, will do *their* part in imparting to others the information they contain ; and this desire is addressed more particularly to my clerical brethren.

Should they, also, happen to fall into the hands of any portion of the weekly or periodical press, it is hoped the benevolent and enlightened editor—through whose research and exertions such a vast mass of information is given to the public—may, without trenching on other valuable matter, find them worthy of a place, in part, in his columns,—the information contained being practical, and of a nature deeply interesting to all classes of readers.

I assume it to be probable that all those of the upper classes of society, who may peruse this little pamphlet, are already acquainted with the simple principles of healing on which the Hydropathic, or Water Cure system is founded ; that the founder of this system is Vincent Priessnitz ; and the place which has for years been visited by the prince, the peer, and the peasant, and acquired such extensive fame by the truly wonderful cures effected there,—is Gräfenburg, a distant village in Austrian Silesia.

And since, in limiting myself to a single sheet, it will be necessary to economise the small space at my command, I purpose adopting the most concise form, and giving the needful information under the four following heads; namely,—

I. THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF THE HYDROPATHIC TREATMENT OF DISEASES.

II. AN OUTLINE OF MY OWN CASE.

III. THE HYDROPATHIC PHYSICIANS PRACTISING IN ENGLAND AT THE PRESENT TIME.

IV. A FEW GENERAL REMARKS.

In reference to the first of the above propositions, I feel assured that I cannot describe “the principles and practice of the Hydropathic treatment of diseases” more clearly and forcibly, than by quoting a few passages from the excellent pamphlet entitled “The Hydropathic Treatment of Diseases, as witnessed at Gräfenburg,” by G. H. Heathcote, M. D., Mount Pleasant, Liverpool,* as follows:—

“The chief principle in the theory of this system is, that the *skin* is the “instrumental organ of preservation and cure, by its perspiring, exhaling, “and secreting functions: accordingly, the Hydropathic treatment is applied to this organ,—to the stomach,—and to the bowels; which two “latter may be considered as the internal skin of the body. Another “principle in this system consists in *much exercise in the open air*. Such “exercise is directly operative upon the skin, and is perfectly consistent “with the theory: as also is *temperance in eating and drinking*; though “temperance in eating is too often violated, and those who indulge in this “respect, inevitably protract the continuance of their diseases. The “treatment rests upon the broad, open, and common sense principles of “strengthening the general health by cold bathing and pure air; by “diluting acrid secretions with cold water, and aiding their exit by *perspiration*.”

“The means employed to produce perspiration are simple, efficacious, “and harmless.”—(The mode of doing it is then given in detail.)

To which I may add, from my own experience, that, after the first or second time, it is not disagreeable, while the cold or tepid ablution, after it, produces sensations of the most agreeable kind.

* Published by Rivington: Second Edition, price 1s. 6d.

“ Perhaps one of the most frequently used medicines is Dover’s, or
 “ James’s powder. And for what purpose? To bring on *perspiration*.
 “ This has been the anxious aim of many an able physician. How often
 “ does perspiration shorten the period of fever, and produce a favourable
 “ crisis. What operation is more desirable in incipient diseases of the
 “ chest, than the exercise of this function of the skin? Perspiration, in
 “ rheumatic affections, in diseases of the bowels, and generally in all the
 “ complaints of childhood, is of itself almost sufficient to terminate the
 “ disease.”

“ Let any individual endowed with but a small share of common sense,
 “ reflect upon the following fact; namely, that the *skin* gives out in the
 “ course of 24 hours, a greater amount of secretion than is passed
 “ through the bowels and kidneys *together*. He will then reflect with
 “ wonder that, in studying the economy of the human frame, and
 “ administering to its maladies, so little attention has been hitherto
 “ paid to this subject, and that the *skin*, the great organ of secretion,
 “ has been so long disregarded.”

“ From that state of skin which fever induces, both in children and
 “ adults, I know of nothing which acts so certainly, so immediately, and
 “ so beneficially, as this mode of treatment.”

“ Medical practitioners of eminence admit, that every diseased appear-
 “ ance, every morbid symptom, upon the skin especially, is a remedial
 “ effort of nature to dislodge the cause of such symptoms. And this
 “ doctrine wants neither rational grounds nor able advocates to uphold
 “ it. The doctrine is this,—That the skin is the instrument or organ
 “ both of a conservative and of a remedial power.

“ Let us just notice the facts which confirm a *conservative* power in the
 “ human frame,—truly, most fearfully and wonderfully made; and then we
 “ shall the more easily arrive at the belief of a *remedial* power, and be the
 “ better prepared to confide in it. Man in exercise multiplies the heat of
 “ his body; if there were no conservative function to relieve this increase
 “ of caloric,—oppression, headache, congestion of the heart and lungs,
 “ and finally, fever would ensue. Here the ordinary function of the skin,
 “ increased to a copious perspiration, gives vent to the accumulated heat,
 “ and in this case acts as a *preservative* power, and in many other cases
 “ by the same process as a *remedial* one. It is a *preventive* in the
 “ former, and a *cure* in the latter instance.

“ Whence arose the practice of *issues*? Was it not drawn from the ob-
 “ servation that where such issues had naturally occurred, the symptoms
 “ of disease gave way? and, on the contrary, where such had been sud-
 “ denly healed, those symptoms had been aggravated.”

To these few extracts from Dr. Heathcote's pamphlet on the PRINCIPLES of the system, I will only add that, in numberless instances which seem to have come under his own practice, the treatment adopted appears rarely to have failed, either in effecting a perfect cure, or in giving permanent relief, in the various cases to which he has applied the system.

I will now give a few extracts from an eminent medical authority of the old school of medicine, who has borne testimony to the value of the system, and to the extreme importance of attending to the great organ of the body—the skin. He says,—

“ The importance of a correct performance of the functions of the skin is far greater than we ordinarily suppose. *The skin is the most important organ of the human body*; and the natural discharge by *perspiration* is inestimable in its results, by freeing the frame from acrid and impure humours. The neglect of this organ by medical men is the cause of many of the most painful disorders of mankind, and I fear has been the occasion of the death of many thousands of our fellow-creatures.”

“ A healthy person of middle stature, discharges through the skin, when in healthy action, by perspiration in the natural way, and without making undue exertion, more than the bladder and bowels put together. By microscopic inspection, it is fully proved that the surface of the skin is composed of pores, or holes through which perspiration escapes, and that a *grain* of sand will cover 500 of them. Hence it is proved to a demonstration that the skin is constructed for the *most important* purpose of the animal economy. Yet how has the skin been to this time disregarded by the medical profession in this country! I grieve, as a medical man, to think of it.”

“ The great desideratum in the early stage of fever, for example, is to induce perspiration—*free and natural perspiration*. All professional men agree that this is one of the most desirable events, and yet most difficult to attain without potent medicines, the influence of which in *other ways* is greatly to be dreaded. The superior value of the Hydro-pathic treatment is very conspicuous in the cure of severe and long-standing chronic diseases. Cough, consumption, asthma, fevers, indigestion, costiveness, cutaneous disorders, nervous complaints, in particular, and diseases arising from the injudicious use of medicine, are also *well known* to be greatly influenced by an improved state of the skin.”

“ The humours, and acrid secretions, which have resisted the force of all medicines, and which remain in the system, poisoning the very fountain of life within, are, by these means, drawn out through the skin,—and the benefit the patient derives is immense. In this way the Hydro-

“ pathic treatment manifests a very great superiority over medicine, which
 “ latter often tends, unhappily, rather to aggravate the disease, than to
 “ assist or to relieve it.”

The author then, in a strain for which we must honour him, for baring the naked truth before us, proceeds as follows :—

“ Now and then, a medical man of eminence has risen up to bear
 “ testimony to the surpassing value of this simple mode of treating dis-
 “ eases. The simple fact, however, which for Truth’s sake I must admit,
 “ is,—that being fond of what is complicated, and disliking what is
 “ simple, we have gone on in our old course. The attention, however, of
 “ society is now aroused to this subject, and I trust will be fruitful of
 “ great results, in the improved treatment of diseases of all kinds.”

I will now give, secondly :—

AN OUTLINE OF MY OWN CASE.

Bred to the Church, I took my degree at Oxford, and in due time was presented to a living in a district where the duties of the parish extended over a considerable tract of country. At the age of 35, a valuable living was offered to me, which I held till I was 52. During the greater part of my life up to this period, I had been subject to rheumatism, to dyspepsia and constipation, almost unremittingly. I had also a pulmonary complaint of long standing, which harrassed me with a continual cough ; and I was subject to great depression and nervousness. I had consulted a number of eminent physicians in London and the country, also at Leamington, &c. I had sought relief in the various medicines which each had prescribed for me, but in vain. Instead of obtaining the relief I sought, I found myself getting worse, and that I was hastening towards that “ bourne from whence no traveller returns.”

Perhaps I ought to mention that I had also tried the system known by the name of Homœopathy, and had consulted the two first physicians professing that system in this country. I tried it for seven months, without any perceptible improvement.

I investigated the principles of this science, and had often been struck with the absence of *reason* for the results attributed to it—of *cause* and *effect*. The physicians to whom I addressed this inquiry, usually replied by referring to the *facts* that were presented at the Homœopathic Dispensary. When, however, the Homœopathic chemist informed me that the dose of medicine usually given under this system to an adult, was the decillionth (or ten thousand millionth) part of a grain of that

medicine, which by the faculty of the day is administered to infants,—I involuntarily came to the conclusion, that the medicine prescribed was intended to keep up what may be termed the mystery of the profession;—that the principles of Homœopathy consisted simply in a system of diet, and in leaving nature to take her own way in the cure of diseases. I now discovered why Homœopathy could impart no relief in my case. It left nature to herself; and *did not help her*. Hydropathy addresses itself to *the great organ* of secretion—the skin; the morbidic humours come forth, and the patient is relieved.

Being unable any longer to perform the duties of my Church, I repaired with my family to the Continent, where I heard of some surprising cures which had been effected at a place called Gräfenberg, in Silesia,—by a person named Priessnitz,—and under a system termed Hydropathy. The first account I had of it was imperfect, and I was incredulous of the results attributed to it. On investigating, however, the basis or groundwork of this mode of cure, I discovered that it was formed on rational and philosophical principles; and I then determined, as a last resource, to repair to Gräfenberg, indulging but faint hopes of its being of service in administering relief in such a case as mine.

With great difficulty I reached Gräfenberg, and placed myself in the hands of Priessnitz, the founder of the system. I will not go into any detail of the mode of treatment prescribed; the general treatment adopted is well described by Dr. Heathcote, and others, who have practised the system and have written upon the subject. The main variation in my case is in the time and quantum, which varies, I believe, in every case, and is regulated by the skill and experience of the medical adviser.

I will therefore proceed at once to the result in my own case; namely, that after continuing this treatment for nearly eleven months, I lost all my former maladies—and was restored to a state of health, such as I had not experienced for 27 years. The rheumatism to which I had been a martyr had entirely left me—my lost appetite returned—my former constipated habit, which, for 20 years, had obliged me to take aperient medicine every other day, had yielded to the treatment. My nerves, which had been shattered, rendering me incapable of fixed or steady thought, and which had subjected me to the wild, alternate sensations of fear, anguish, grief—now became braced and invigorated; and, as a necessary consequence, composed. My mind was calm and tranquil, and I returned to my native country grateful to a beneficent Preserver, for restoring me to a condition of body and of mind, which those only can appreciate who have felt what I had experienced.

I had been weighed a short time previous to going to Gräfenberg, and

I found that during the treatment, I had gained 25 pounds in weight. My system, long imbued with complicated disorders, aggravated by the drugs I had taken, had now become cleansed, and in the cleansing had become strengthened, and invigorated. The sufferings of my physical frame were only equalled by my mind's distress. My body is now in health—my mind at ease.

Feeling, now, a deep interest in the subject, and anxious to obtain all practical information upon it, I have, since my return to England, visited every Hydropathic Establishment at present formed in this country, and having made myself acquainted with each Physician connected with them, his history and standing, I now give, *thirdly*, in order, according to merit—

THE HYDROPATHIC PHYSICIANS PRACTISING IN ENGLAND AT THE PRESENT TIME.

These consist of four Physicians and two Surgeons; namely,—Dr. Mastalier, Sydney Gardens, Bath; Dr. Heathcote, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool; Dr. Wilson, Malvern; Dr. Freeman, Cheltenham; Mr. Weiss, Stanstead Bury; and Mr. Courtney, Ramsgate.

Dr. Mastalier is a German Physician, the son of the late Dr. Mastalier, of Vienna. He is a person of classic attainments, and a member of various colleges on the Continent. In the year 1835 he was deputed to visit Gräfenberg, in company with two other physicians of eminence, to investigate the merits of the Hydropathic system of treating diseases. At this time, the extraordinary success of Priessnitz in healing acute and chronic diseases, had reached every court in Europe.

I may mention in this place, that the Austrian Government was so highly satisfied with the result of the investigation, and the intrinsic value of the principles on which the system was founded, that it has caused establishments to be formed in different parts of the empire. And the Hydropathic treatment now forms in some colleges a necessary part of the examination for diploma. The subject has been adopted with the same spirit, and in a similar manner, by the several courts of Russia, Prussia, Sweden; and a portion of the Germanic Confederation.

After remaining at Gräfenberg for a considerable length of time, Dr. Mastalier returned to Vienna, and afterwards practised, under the auspices of the Court, the Hydropathic system,—devoting especial attention to female cases,—for upwards of seven years, with success equal to Priessnitz; and was distinguished not less for his talent than for his mild, gentlemanly deportment.

He came to England in the course of last year, and has now located himself at Bath, where he has taken Sydney Gardens, the house and pleasure-grounds of the late Duke of Cleveland, and has fitted them up in a suitable manner, combining all the ease and comfort so much regarded by invalids. It is not a boarding-house: Dr. Mastalier considering it better that each person should reside in his own private residence or lodgings. I ought to mention, that Dr. Mastalier is well acquainted with the English language.

Dr. Wilkinson, well known in the literary world for his scientific pursuits, and for the services he has rendered to practical chemistry by his laborious researches, is the honorary consulting Physician to the Establishment. Douches, in every variety, comprising fourteen different kinds, were in course of fitting-up.

Bath is well adapted for the practice of Hydropathic treatment, the water being remarkably cold and pure—the air mild in winter, and, as Sydney Gardens is situated at the foot of lofty hills, it is not too warm in the summer season. The scenery in the neighbourhood of Bath is picturesque and interesting.

I will conclude this short commentary on Dr. Mastalier, by saying that, from what I know of him, and from all I have heard, he is, not excepting Priessnitz, one of the first Hydropathic physicians in Europe.

The next Physician in rank, practising the Hydropathic system in England, is Dr. Heathcote, of Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, who is of good family and standing in his profession; and who having for some years experienced in his own practice (which was extensive,) the efficacy of Cold Water in the treatment of diseases, visited Gräfenberg for a considerable time, and witnessed the Hydropathic system as practised there by Priessnitz. He has since treated, very successfully, numerous aggravated cases of Debility, Indigestion, Constipation, Nervous Complaints, Rheumatism, Pulmonary and other disorders.

Dr. Heathcote thoroughly and practically understands the Hydropathic treatment; by his enlightened medical application of the principle of Hydropathy, he has considerably improved on the ruder practice of it by Priessnitz; and I would, with confidence, place any member of my family under him. A short time before I was with Dr. Heathcote, Lord Wallscourt had been one of his patients, and had been successfully treated at Dr. Heathcote's own house; together with other families of distinction. Douches, of all kinds, were in progress.

I need say little of the town of Liverpool, which is well known as the

second seaport in the empire, and is justly famed for the magnificence of its public buildings. The air of Liverpool is bracing, and the adjacent country interesting. New Brighton, a well-known sea-bathing place, three miles from Liverpool, and noted for the firmness and extent of its sands, will, I understand, have the benefit of Dr. Heathcote's advice in the summer months.

The third Physician practising Hydropathy in England is Dr. Wilson, of Malvern, whose establishment, from the publicity given to it through the press, has attracted much attention. Dr. Wilson commenced practising the Water Cure in the summer of last year, and has treated a number of diseases successfully. He visited Gräfenberg in the autumn of 1841, for the treatment of his own case, which was of an aggravated character; he came away completely restored,—and so highly satisfied with the excellence of the principles on which the system is founded, that he gave up his own practice for the sake of devoting himself to it. Dr. Gully, of London, is now associated with him. The experience of the latter in the Hydropathic treatment of diseases, is limited to the practice he has had since he has been at Malvern. I am not sure that Dr. Wilson is an M.D., or a Member of the College of Physicians; this, however, has perhaps not rendered him less skilful in Hydropathic treatment.

Dr. Freeman has recently opened a small Hydropathic Establishment at Cheltenham. He is the son of a respectable Physician, and has travelled on the Continent,—not, however, with the desire, I believe, to obtain a knowledge of the Cold Water System. He is, notwithstanding, a person of some talent; and though his experience is limited, he has effected some good cures since he opened his Establishment.

We now come to the two Surgeons practising the Cold Water System; the first of whom is Mr. Weiss, who, in experience in the treatment of diseases under this system, should have come after Dr. Heathcote, but, by profession, is placed here. Mr. Weiss is a native of Freiwaldau, in Austria. He visited Gräfenberg about the year 1837, and afterwards practised in his native village, till the summer of last year,—when he was invited to Stanstead Bury, where he has had the opportunity of seeing many patients, and of proving the excellence of the system, by the cures he has effected there. Stanstead Bury, however, is not particularly well-suited for the residence of invalids, as it is in part surrounded by marsh and stagnant waters, which cover the face of the country for many miles during some months of the year. I understand Mr. Weiss purposes returning, in the summer, to his native village, where his family are still living. Mr. Weiss, though advanced in years, has entirely abandoned the ordinary practice of medicine, and has devoted himself to Hydropathy, considering it as the only cure for diseases hitherto deemed beyond the reach of human skill.

The improvement in females, after adopting the system for some time, has even been more remarkable than in our sex,—their frames being more sympathetic, their nerves more sensitive. I simply give the fact, without deeming it necessary to go into the cause.

There are some other works written on the Hydropathic system, but I have preferred quoting from the pamphlet referred to, because it gives more clearly, concisely, and practically than any other, the principles and practice of the system, and is the only work written by a Physician practising it in England, which is suitable to these pages.

That this system of treating diseases may not, at first, receive the general sanction of the medical profession, is not improbable: nay, it may even, perhaps, be strongly opposed by them,—since no innovation, however useful and true, has ever met with any other reception. Many members of the profession have, however, casually admitted to me that “the practice of medicine has undergone very considerable changes in the last few years;” and that they “have hitherto given, perhaps, rather more medicine than was necessary.” I cannot here withhold expressing the conviction of my mind; that a large amount of painful suffering,—and I much fear many deaths,—have been occasioned by the practice of administering medicines in the quantities that have been prescribed. I say this rather in sorrow than in anger, not wishing to reproach medical professors, for many of whom I entertain the highest regard. In my own case, I am persuaded, the medicines I took, though under the advice of eminent Physicians, tended greatly to aggravate the disorders with which I was afflicted.

In conclusion, I would fain hope that the few observations embodied in this sheet, may have some influence in subduing the pangs, and softening the severity of disease—and be the means, under the blessing of God, of alleviating, in some degree, the sufferings of humanity. Then may I say to my soul, “thou hast cast thy bread upon the waters, and shalt find it after many days,”—then too may I add, “my labour hath not been in vain in the Lord.”



THE END.

